

ANGLICAN BISHOPS PLAY POLITICS WITH HOMOSEXUAL DEBATE

August 31, 1998 (David W. Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, www.wayoflife.org) - On August 5 the Anglican bishops meeting at the Lambeth Conference in England approved a statement declaring that homosexual practice is "incompatible with Scripture" and urging abstinence outside of traditional heterosexual marriage. At the end of the "long and tortuous" debate Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey said that he could see "no room in Holy Scripture or the entire Christian tradition for any sexual activity outside matrimony of husband and wife" (Edmund Doogue, "Lambeth Conference Firmly Rejects Liberal Line on Homosexuality," Ecumenical News International, August 6, 1998). The resolution had strong support, with 526 bishops approving it, and 115 either opposing it or abstaining.

The Lambeth Conference, which brings together Anglican bishops from throughout the world, meets every 10 years.

In practice, as is often the case with denominational pronouncements, the Lambeth resolution on homosexuality means almost nothing. There are many unrepentant homosexual priests and church members in Anglican and Episcopal churches. Anglican and Episcopal priests in various parts of the world perform blessing ceremonies for homosexual marriages.

Immediately after the passing of the resolution, Bishop Richard Holloway of Edinburgh, head of the Scottish Episcopal Church, complained about the "homophobia" and the "biblical fundamentalism" which was present during the debate. Other bishops told the media that the resolution would be ignored. U.S. Episcopal Bishop John Spong said, "Be assured that today's minority will inevitably be tomorrow's majority." He predicted there would be openly gay bishops among the participants at the next Lambeth Conference (Ibid.).

Before the end of the Lambeth Conference on August 8, homosexual groups within Anglicanism released a "Pastoral Statement to Lesbian and Gay Anglicans," signed by more than 100 Anglican bishops attending the Lambeth Conference, including the leaders of Anglican denominations in South Africa, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, Scotland and Wales (Edmund Doogue, "More than 100 Bishops Apologise for 'Rejection' Felt by Homosexuals," Ecumenical News International, August 10, 1998). The statement said: "It is our deep concern that you do not feel abandoned by your church and that you know of our continued respect and support. ... You, our sisters and brothers in Christ, deserve a more thorough hearing than you received over the past three weeks [of the Lambeth Conference]. We will work to make that so."